

Unitarian Society of New Haven  
Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees  
April 8, 2021

Accepted May 13, 2021

**Board Members Present:** President Nancy Apfel, Vice President Emily McCave, Clerk Becky Friedkin, Treasurer Larry Copes, Past President Al Bosch; Trustees at Large Bernice Marie-Daly, Rich Stockton, Tina Santoni; Youth Trustee Elizabeth S.; Rev. Lindasusan Ulrich, ex officio

**Others Present:** Gwen Heuss-Severance and David Stagg (Management Team)

## 1. Gather

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board met online via Zoom.

Nancy called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm

Tina lit the chalice and Nancy read “The Unseen Skeleton” from *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, by Isabel Wilkerson

We read the Board Covenant and followed with a life check-in.

There were no changes to the agenda.

## 2. Future Planning

### Spring Board Retreat

Emily reported on plans for the spring Board retreat on May 8, from 9 am to noon. The overarching goal is to deepen our understanding of a commitment to radical welcome and anti-racist work within our congregation and especially within the Board. Emily will be sending the agenda and some **pre-retreat work** – some readings and a video from 2020 General Assembly. The entire Management Team is invited to participate, if they are able.

### What does the Board want to focus on through June?

Nancy noted that everyone who responded with ideas about what we should focus on mentioned **anti-oppression work**. She noted that she, Emily, and Becky are hopeful that the Board will adopt the 8<sup>th</sup> principle before the end of the year. We could also urge committees and task forces to adopt the 8<sup>th</sup> principle. **Discussion on the 8<sup>th</sup> principle** followed, including:

- Our 7 principles don't talk about beloved community, doesn't address the open-mindedness needed to be radically welcoming.
- The COIC report included so many testimonies clearly demonstrating that the existing 7 principles have not been enough to make many people of color feel welcome, included, or valued. There are people in the USNH community who are hurt by our actions.
- The 8<sup>th</sup> principle recognizes and names the fact that we live within systems of oppression and we need to be actively against those systems in order to be inclusive and welcoming.
- As a white person, it is my responsibility to listen openly when POC tell me what they need.
- We are in a racially and economically diverse area, but are a fairly homogeneous congregation socioeconomically.
- It is the only principle that calls for accountability
- This is a culture shift. Board leadership on this will help move the congregation forward.

- One of the good things about the 8<sup>th</sup> principle is that it allows us to have conversations about what this actually means for us – so that we don't just accept the principle, but actually live it.

Rev. Lindasusan noted that Paula Cole Jones is very clear that the current incarnation is probably not the final wording, but the goal is to get the overarching spirit of it accepted and imbedded in congregations before wordsmithing. There is a time for leadership and a time for followership, and this is a time for followership, with respect to language.

**Leadership Development** was also mentioned by a good number of people. Where and how to locate this work? Discussion included:

- The Board might create a standing Board committee with at least one Board member and non-Board members with rotating terms.
- Engaging with the Nominating Committee could be helpful.
- Do most congregants know how to get involved?
- We used to have everyone in the congregation fill out a form about what they might have to offer. Many people were not specific about how they could volunteer, and this is also an administrative challenge to match people.
- Consider a system of term limits for non-elected leadership.
- Leadership development seems like a great role for the past president of the Board.
- There seems to be a lack of continuity on Nominating, as some of the practices used when current Board members were on the committee no longer seem to be in use.

Becky, who is the current Board rep to Nominating, noted that next year's Nominating Committee, Board leadership, and Rev. Lindasusan will be meeting early in the next congregational year to develop a new charge for the committee.

Emily noted that there seems to be a lot of support for creating a committee and that it would be great to have people who are not officers take on this work.

***Becky and Nancy will work on how to move forward.***

**A name change for USNH – do we want to take this up now?**

Rich summarized Jeannette Faber's proposal in a recent service (date) to change the name, perhaps (but not necessarily) to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Greater New Haven. Board discussion included:

- Something as foundational as our name will elicit lots of conversation and should wait until we can really engage with one another in person.
- There may be some legal work and expense involved
- A name change could be linked to discussion of the 8<sup>th</sup> principle

Rev. Lindasusan suggested that this might be a way to get people back involved into USNH life. We could start the conversation in the context of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary and take the entire year to talk and

think about it. The Board received Rev. Lindasusan's suggestion positively and tabled the discussion for the rest of this congregational year.

### **Board self-evaluation and Board size**

Rich reported that Joe Sullivan, from the UUA New England region, said that we should come up with our own method to evaluate ourselves. Rich reviewed annual reports and found them to be mostly descriptive. Emily noted that our monthly process evaluation is also a method of effectiveness.

***Tina and Rich will work to develop a survey of the Board*** about our performance, for use this year.

Nancy brought up the **role of the past president** on the Board, suggesting that perhaps the past president should go off the Board to make room for a new At-Large Trustee with more energy to participate in Board work. Discussion centered on the ability of the past president to be a helpful advisor to the next president. Emily is comfortable reaching out to Nancy for advice as needed and also likes the idea of transitioning to leadership development after her presidency.

We agreed that Nancy will not attend Board meetings next year unless requested to do so.

### **3. Reports**

#### *Interim report of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Finance*

Larry reported that the committee:

- has worked hard to clarify financial roles and responsibilities;
- recommends that the Treasurer make quarterly reports to the board and bring other matters to the Board's attention as needed, allowing the Treasurer to spend more time with the Finance Committee, and to some extent, the Management Team; and
- recommends that the Treasurer not be required to attend all Board meetings, but there is no reason to remove the Treasurer from Board.

There was discussion about whether or not the Treasurer should continue to be a Board member, including some concerns about accountability if the Treasurer is not a Board member. Larry noted that it needs to be very clear that the Treasurer is a liaison with the Board and takes the Board's requests to the Finance Committee and Management Team and makes sure they are acted upon. Rev. Lindasusan added that the quarterly reports from the Treasurer to the Board are a line of accountability. We tabled the issue of making a recommendation to the congregation about the Treasurer's status on the Board.

### **Board positions to be filled for FY22**

Elizabeth will not be able to continue as Youth Trustee next year.

Becky will let Nominating know that we would like two At-Large Trustees to be elected in May.

### **Minister's Report**

Rev. Lindasusan suggested having a multi-day celebration of USNH's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary in November, in conjunction with their installation as the culminating event. The Board was enthusiastically supportive.

Rev. Lindasusan's report to the Board is appended to these minutes.

### **Management Team Reports**

David reported that Gwen will be stepping down from the Management Team at the end of June, after staying on for an extra year. Send any suggestions for replacements to David.

The Management Team is forming a committee to plan the Installation of Rev. Lindasusan this fall.

### ***Budget updates***

We don't get the numbers through the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter (end of March) until next month. Terry Durham has also promised a forecast about how the year will end up. As of today, income is quite good at 77%, with pledge income at 80%. Expenses are way down, but there are data missing.

The Management Team is close to finalizing the proposed FY22 budget, which will come to the Board for approval in May. The UUA announced today that health insurance rates will go up 10% on July 1 and then another increase on January 1, 2022.

Two outstanding items are the stewardship pledge number and the endowment contribution (proposed 2% contribution). Greg Seaman suggested that we ask for 3%; David will discuss with Fred Morrison, Endowment chair. Becky will keep in close touch with David about stewardship progress.

### ***Monitoring of Policies***

The Board accepted the compliance report on Policy 1.1, Treatment of Congregants, Friends, and Visitors, which is appended to these minutes.

### ***Building Reopening Advisory Group:***

Gwen reported that there is conversation among the BRAG members about loosening our protocols, now that many people have been vaccinated. The team needs to get together and dig into the data and science to determine what makes sense. They will be meeting in next week or so and continue to urge people to be very cautious.

### **Stewardship Report**

The stewardship report was emailed to the Board and MT and is attached to these minutes.

## **4. Closing**

### **Consent Agenda**

The Board accepted the minutes from the March 11, 2021 Board meeting.

### **Process Observation**

Rich noted that we had a very busy meeting, with lots of discussion. Amazingly, we are only slightly past 8:30. Good discussion about the 8<sup>th</sup> principle. Lengthy discussion about a leadership committee.

People had a lot of good ideas and there was a lot of participation. The meeting was well run and people were acknowledged when they wanted to speak.

**Thank-you notes**

Becky, Emily, Nancy, and Tina will write thank-you notes this month.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:38.

Respectfully submitted,  
Becky Friedkin, Clerk

**Attachments:**

Rev. Lindasusan's report to the Board

Management Team reports of compliance with policies 1.1

Stewardship update



## Minister's Report to the Board of Trustees

April 8, 2021

### What do you notice?

- Since I began in August 2020, I've been working to get the lay of the land at USNH: meeting people, learning the systems, and generally figuring out the rhythms of this ministry. Now, in my 9th month here, I'm really feeling the lack of in-person contact — even more than I have in the past. I have a growing sense of how much I can't know without the informal encounters that help build and maintain relationships. I miss the chance to go deeper with those outside the congregation's leadership (as wonderful as you all are).
- The reopening process is going to be more challenging than I think I'd realized (and I'm probably not alone in that). There are so many variables to consider as we formulate a plan. The process will require patience, which may be in short supply as more people feel comfortable post-vaccination. The top priority remains safety for everyone.
- I've been heartened by the things Board members want to work on over the next few months. Worthwhile topics all the way across!

### Do you have questions?

- What do you think of wrapping the installation into the celebration of the congregation's 70th anniversary? It was originally scheduled to take place in October, but we could shift it to the weekend of November 13-14, depending on people's availability. (This is the weekend closest to the official anniversary of November 11.)

### What do you need?

- Please join me in giving kudos to the Stewardship Team for their hard work on the campaign. Their diligence and enthusiasm have made my heart sing.
- Here's a reminder about the upcoming conferences I'll be attending:
  - ◆ Renaissance (for spiritual directors/companions): April 20-24
  - ◆ Festival of Homiletics (for preachers): May 17-21
  - ◆ Ministry Days/General Assembly (for UU ministers/all UUs): June 21-27

### Anything else?

- The Management Team is in the process of updating SOP-0005 (Burials and Memorials) and SOP-0014 (Fees for Memorial Services). They're in the review stage now and will likely be published in the next few weeks.

## Management Team monitoring of Policy Governance Section 1.1

Current Governance Policy sections are in black; MT interpretations in blue; MT report is in red

### 1.1 Treatment of Congregants, Friends, and Visitors

With respect to interactions with members, friends and visitors of the church, the Management Team shall not cause or allow conditions, procedures, or decisions that are unsafe, disrespectful, unnecessarily intrusive, or that fail to provide appropriate confidentiality and privacy.

*Approved by the Board: October 9, 2014; revised February 12, 2015*

#### MT Interpretation

The Management Team will work to maintain our Principles, Mission and Values using our Covenant of Right Relations within all the activities of the Society. To that end, the MT will develop Policies and Procedures to provide guidance to the various committees, task forces and society members. The MT will receive and act upon any reports of activities that are inconsistent with our values or compromise the safety, confidentiality or privacy of members and friends. The MT will also ensure that access to confidential information is strictly on a “need to know” basis

*MT Interpretation Approved by the Board: March 14<sup>th</sup> 2019*

#### MT Report

We have focused on covenantal relations as a basis for our activities and highlighted our Covenant during services. The Covenantal Relations Committee has hosted a Community Circle following the Service on the first Sunday of the month.

In May 2020 the MT converted the Employee Handbook into the Standard Operating Procedure format and released it as SOP-0016 for publication on our website to be available to all. The Handbook was revised in November 2020 to reflect the discontinuation of the Section 125 Flexible Benefits Plan.

The arrival of the pandemic in March necessitated focus on the safety of our staff, members and friends. The MT created the Building Reopening and Advisory Group (BRAG) to provide procedures for building use that would maximize safety. The BRAG group issued a series of guidelines via the Newsletter and published these on our website. The BRAG group has also liaised with our daycare director to optimize use of meeting rooms, stairwells and bathrooms.

During the summer, poison ivy was a major concern for the daycare and caused a health and safety issue for our sexton. MT authorized removal by our landscape company. Two major storms caused extensive tree damage which led to a safety concern. MT contracted with Sandweiss Tree Company for significant remedial tree work.

Our concern about adequate supervision of USNH Mental Health Support activities, specifically the “Healing Souls” meetings has been resolved by the training and professional oversight now part of the “Hopes Nest” activity

Confidential data are stored in the Quickbooks and ChurchDB databases. MT continues to monitor access to both databases to ensure access is on a “need to know” basis. G-Suite accounts for Rev John Marsh and Rev Megan Lloyd Joiner were closed after consultation with them.

## **Management Team monitoring of Policy Governance Section 1.1**

With the exception of safety issues noted above, MT is unaware of any activities that are inconsistent with our values or compromise the safety, confidentiality or privacy of members and friends.

We report compliance with section 1.1

*Submitted by the Management Team 8<sup>th</sup> April 2021*



## Stewardship Update, 4/8/21

As of today, we have pledges from 144 households, or 57% of our pledge units. Pledges total \$370,325, or 76% of our stewardship goal of \$490,000.

Changes in pledges compared to FY21:

- 24 decreases (17% of pledges, totaling a loss of ~ \$8,100)
- 57 same-level pledges (40% of pledges)
- 61 Increased pledges (42% of pledges, totaling an increase of almost \$19,000)
- 2 new pledges totaling \$700

In the aggregate, households pledging in both years increased by 3%.

FY21 pledges from those we have not yet heard from total almost \$121,000.

The Stewardship Team is calling and emailing every pledging household to encourage prompt pledging, always noting that those unable to make a financial commitment can “check the box” to receive a waiver. We also encourage people to pledge even a small amount, although we find that some people think that a pledge of less than \$100 is not “worth” it or acceptable.

In your other USNH meetings and conversations with other members, please encourage people to make their pledge ASAP so we can close out the campaign by the end of April. If they are unable to pledge online, they can request a paper pledge form from Jamie, or email or call her with their pledge information.

Becky Friedkin, Stewardship Committee